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ABSTRACT

This policy brief synthesizes the proceedings of a symposium on children and family services, focusing on elements of successful collaboration among human services agencies. In the first section of the brief, the meaning of collaboration in the family services context is clarified, and ways in which the current focus on collaboration differs from earlier service integration strategies are explored. The next section offers brief descriptions of the Florida State Coordinating Council of Early Childhood Services; the Missouri Caring Communities Program; and the Maryland Children and Family Service Reform Initiative. In the following section, six essential ingredients to improving services through integration are discussed, with reference to the three state programs. These ingredients are: (1) a climate for change, including the realization that a problem exists with some vision for solving it, prior experience with coordinating services, a renewed stimulus for change, and start-up funding; (2) leadership at many levels, including foundation officials, mid-level managers, project directors and staff, and families; (3) flexibility to alter service system structures and delivery methods and adequate financial resources; (4) formal and informal problem-solving structures and mechanisms for dealing with conflict; (5) supportive relationships among partners in the collaborations; and (6) demonstrated and documented results. The final section offers concluding comments on potential pitfalls, needs for information and consensus, and means of replicating success; and discusses future directions for promoting a collaborative approach to improved services. (AC)

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Towards Improved Services for Children and Families:

Forging New Relationships through Collaboration

A Policy Brief based on

The Eighth Annual Symposium of the A.L. Mailman Family Foundation

White Plains, New York

July 1, 1991

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ABOUT THE A. L. MAILMAN FAMILY FOUNDATION

The A.L. Mailman Family Foundation is a private foundation that has focused in recent years on three major program areas: early childhood education, early intervention, and family support. Within these areas, the Foundation supports efforts that advance knowledge, improve the training and development of professionals who work with children and families, and promote best practices. The Foundation also funds the development and dissemination of materials created to improve practice, promote public education, and inform public policy. As part of its activities, the Foundation sponsors a yearly symposium designed to address issues of concern in its program areas.

ABOUT THE INSTITUTE FOR EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

The Institute for Educational Leadership (IEL) is a 28 year-old not-for-profit organization whose mission is to improve educational opportunities and results for children and youth by developing and supporting leaders who work together. IEL activities engage education and health/human service agencies, schools, school boards, advocacy groups, foundations, corporations, and all levels of government. IEL works to enhance the skills of present and emerging leaders. It facilitates collaborative efforts to create more efficient, enlight-

ened service delivery and public policy for children and families.

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A Policy Brief based on

The Eighth Annual Symposium of the
A.L. Mailman Family Foundation

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Introduction

"It takes a village to raise a child"
African Proverb

All across the country dedicated people are finding new ways of working together to improve services for children and families. They are attempting to weave together the patches of programs currently available into a system that can provide comprehensive services in a way that respects the unique needs of individual children, families and communities.

This effort to improve human services is more important than ever. The problems facing children and families have become commonplace headlines:

- One in four children today are growing up in poverty.
- An estimated one-third of all mothers receive inadequate prenatal care.
- Connections to kinship groups and other natural supports have diminished.
- There has been a dramatic increase in the number of single parents, teen parents, and divorced parents.
- American families feel more and more stress in their daily lives, trying to balance work and family without adequate supports.

The list goes on and on. Hundreds of reports published in the past decade document the reality that if we as a nation are to thrive, we must turn our attention to solving the critical problems faced by children and families. We must find better ways to deliver services, and to shore up the loss of human potential that threatens our communities.

Yet we also know that rather than helping to address these issues, our current system of services too often fails children and families. According to Melaville and Blank (1991), failures in the current system include the following:

- Most services are crisis-oriented, rather than preventative.
- The current social welfare system divides the problems of children and families into rigid and distinct categories that fail to reflect their interrelated causes and solutions.
- There is a lack of functional communication among the agencies serving children and families.
- There is an inability of specialized agencies to easily craft comprehensive solutions to complex problems.
- Existing services are insufficiently funded.

With the challenge of improving this service system in mind, and as part of their ongoing commitment to children and families, the A.L. Mailman Family Foundation held its annual symposium in July, 1991, with a focus on collaborative efforts to deliver human services to children. As described by Dr. Marilyn Segal, Chair of the Foundation, the purpose of the meeting was not only to share experiences and generate ideas, it was also to address some of the hard issues and questions that need to be answered if we are truly going to find better ways of delivering services to children and families.

The unique format of the one day symposium included opening and closing remarks by Lisbeth B. Schorr, author and lecturer from the Harvard School of Public Health; three panel presentations highlighting examples of successful collaborations from Florida, Missouri and Maryland; and synthesis and open discussion led by Martin Blank from the Institute for Educational Leadership. More than 100 participants attended the symposium, representing a wide variety of roles and experiences including service providers, policy-makers, academicians, and funders.

This policy brief synthesizes the symposium proceedings, capturing many of the details of successful collaboration. It is designed for use by others who are interested in facilitating change in their communities and states. We first provide an overview of what is meant by collaboration, and what distinguishes current efforts from earlier attempts at service integration. Second, we describe six key ingredients of successful efforts as they emerged in symposium discussion. Finally, we summarize the closing remarks by Lisbeth Schorr, and draw some conclusions regarding the overall message of the symposium, and future directions for promoting a collaborative approach to improved services for children and families.

What is Collaboration and Why Now?

"Compared to the last wave of service integration, today there is much more of a genuine vision of what we want. What people are talking about is really a transformed set of relationships between people. At the heart of this is what should be different between a helping professional and a family, or between a community and a family."

Frank Farrow

Center for the Study of Social Policy

Collaboration, services integration, partnerships—have all become buzzwords for the movement to improve services for children and families. Collaboration has been defined by Bruner (1991) as: "a process to reach goals that cannot be achieved singly (or at a minimum, can not be reached as efficiently). As a process, collaboration is a means to an end, not an end in itself. The desired end is more comprehensive and appropriate services for families that improve family outcomes."

This movement for more collaboration is not new. There has been a long tradition of service integration over the past several years, including attempts in the 1970s to provide demonstration projects and technical studies of service integration (Gerry and Certo, 1992). Yet during the symposium discussion, and in the summary by Lisbeth Schorr, three main differences emerged which distinguish the current focus on collaboration from earlier service integration strategies: a clearer vision of what we want, more interest from key players, and a better sense of how to collaborate—what works and what does not. This new knowledge base, along with changing economic and social conditions, appears to be providing a stronger foundation from which to launch more successful service improvement efforts using a collaborative approach.

We have a clearer vision of what we want. We now have a better appreciation for the fact that change starts with a vision of improved services for children and families. This vision appears to include the following key elements:

- Children must be seen in the context of families, and families in the context of the communities in which they live.
- Comprehensive services must be provided in a way that respects the individual needs and cultures of the families and communities.
- Program services must go beyond the provision of goods and services and must nurture relationships that help people grow.
- Services must be "democratic." That is, that the people most directly effected must have some

control over the types of services provided and the ways they are delivered.

We have more interest from key players. More people today are willing to admit that the human service delivery systems are not working as well as needed to serve the growing demands of children and families. Policy-makers are concerned about the growing need for services in a time of shrinking budgets. They want more bang for their buck, they want to avoid duplication of services and they want services to improve for their constituents. They therefore support efforts to bring the various agencies and institutions together to affect change. At the same time the business community is concerned about the effectiveness of the current and future workforce. In addition, unlike earlier integration efforts, the education community is now more willing to become involved in collaborative efforts. Finally, the general public has become increasingly aware of the growing differential between the haves and have nots, while more and more people have begun to feel the need for increased services. This adds momentum to the call for creative solutions to the domestic crisis.

We have learned more about what works. Through trial and error we have learned valuable lessons about what works and what does not. For example, we now know that we cannot "parachute" a specific model into a state or community, that we must be responsive to the culture of each new location. We also know that we need structures that provide a balance of state guidance and local decision-making and problem-solving mechanisms that involve input from a variety of players. Finally, we know that we must have measurable outcomes to convince policy-makers that new solutions and increased resources are essential. The foundation upon which we are building is now stronger than it has been in the past, but we must continue to bolster its structure. The focus of our vision must be sharpened and widely shared, and the commitment and passion for change must grow. As we implement fundamental changes in the ways we support children and families, we must continually discover and utilize what works.

Six Essential Ingredients to Improving Services Through Integration

The symposium included case studies of successful collaborations from three states: Florida, Missouri and Maryland. Each of these examples reflected the strong foundation discussed above: they had a vision of support for children, families and communities; they had the interest and support from key players; and the process they used to make change reflected what we now know works. We have organized our discussion of the case studies around six key ingredients that appear to be essential to making change and improving service delivery systems:

- a climate for change;
- flexibility and resources;
- supportive relationships; and
- leadership;
- problem-solving structures;
- documented results.

We begin with a brief overview of each example and follow with a discussion of each key ingredient.

The Florida State Coordinating Council of Early Childhood Services The Florida State Coordinating Council was established by the state legislature in 1989 as an independent non-partisan body to ensure coordination among the various agencies and programs serving at-risk and handicapped preschool children (birth to 5), high risk pregnant women, and teens; to facilitate communication, cooperation and maximum use of resources; and to promote high standards for all programs servicing preschool children in Florida. The 30 member state advisory council brought together two previously established state coordinating groups—one on child care and one on early childhood education, and reflects a wide variety of roles and experiences. Local interagency councils were established in each of Florida's 67 school districts.

The Missouri Caring Communities Program The Missouri Departments of Elementary and Secondary Education, Mental Health and Social Services, and the Danforth Foundation joined forces with two communities to create pilot programs called Caring Communities in two sites—one rural and one urban. The case study presented at the symposium was the urban site in St. Louis located at the Walbridge Elementary School. Caring Communities seek to: keep high risk children performing successfully in school; help those children and their families avoid family separation and dysfunction; and help the children stay out of trouble with the law. The Walbridge Caring Communities Program seeks to respond to the comprehensive needs of children and families in the school. Services are school- and home-based, and include intensive support and the nurturance of non-kinship networks in the community.

The Maryland Children and Family Service Reform Initiative With support from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, Maryland has established a model for interagency integrated family-centered case management services in Prince George's County. Funds are diverted from each department's out-of-home placement budgets to provide non-categorical, flexible family preservation services. The Governor's Subcabinet on Children, Youth and Families is an interagency structure which has responsibility for planning and collaboration with a wide variety of state agencies, advocacy groups, and service providers. It oversees the Children and Family Service Reform Initiative. Plans are underway to expand the model to eight other communities in the state.

What Families Want from Human Services

*As presented by Donna Stark
Maryland Children and Families
Reform Initiative*

First they want support for what their priorities are, not for what we want their priorities to be. They want one person—not several persons helping them negotiate difficult situations and difficult systems; they want a user-friendly system that doesn't give them the run-around from one agency to another with millions of forms to fill out to get some basic responses from the state; they want services that are comprehensive enough to respond to their entire family's needs and respond to the causes rather than the symptoms of the issues that they bring before us.

Families want us to understand and respect the fact that we enter into their lives for a very brief moment in time; that they are their own managers; that they take care of themselves most of their lives and we're just there for a moment.

They want a quick and effective response to their request—not days and weeks of waiting for an appointment. They want support from us when problems surface, not at the time when we are asking, "Should these children remain with the family?" And they want us to appreciate the diversity of their lifestyles and their values.

I always hold these out before me as we make policy decisions at the state level.

A Climate for Change

"All the elements and the climate and the amoeba have to be right to create life. I think that's really what's happening now and it's certainly a very exciting time for all of us who are part of it."

Donna Stark

Children and Family Services Reform Initiative

When change finally begins to occur, it seems as if it has been smoldering for awhile. Rather than occurring out of the blue, there are certain conditions that appear to provide a climate for change. These precursors, along with a spark of leadership, often light the fire that makes things happen. From the case studies, four conditions emerge:

- The realization that a problem exists with some vision for solving it;
- Prior experience with coordinating services;
- A renewed stimulus for change; and
- Funding to get started.

The case studies illustrate these conditions:

Florida had been moving towards additional services for young children since the mid-1980s. A 1985 child care bill put in place a child care advisory council under the Secretary of Health and Rehabilitation Services. In 1986, the Pre-Kindergarten Early Intervention Program legislation established new state-funded pre-kindergarten programs and an Advisory Council to the Commissioner of Education on Pre-Kindergarten Programs. Since both councils dealt with early childhood issues, many of the same people in the state ended up on both councils, providing prior experience working together. What became increasingly clear however was that the boom in early childhood was accompanied by real turf issues across the state among people from human services, child care, pre-kindergarten and public schools. Three leading early childhood advocates in the state, including the Chairs of both advisory groups and a staff person for the State House Education Committee, got together and decided to address the problem. At the same time, the incoming speaker of the House of Representatives was a well-known child advocate and interested in collaborative approaches, which provided a stimulus for new action.

Initial thoughts were to develop a new agency. However, since the development of new agencies is not popular politically, the legislation that was drafted and passed created the State Coordinating Council for Early Childhood Services, consolidating the previous two advisory groups, with staff responsibility alternating annually between the Departments of Education

and Health and Rehabilitation Services. Ann Levy, the staff member with the Committee on Education of Florida's House of Representatives summarized the climate that led to this success:

"This whole movement, like everything else that happens in legislation was the happy result of planning, working and a lot of serendipity. The whole thing came together at the right time."

In Missouri the impetus for Caring Communities basically started when the Acting Commissioner of Education became increasingly concerned that the teachers in schools did not have the tools to address the problems that children were facing in their classrooms. Initially, he asked for help in solving some of these problems from the Department of Mental Health. Social Services and Health were then brought into the discussion. At the same time, a member of the Danforth Foundation staff had been working for some years with different directors of state agencies to support early intervention and family support efforts. The nationally recognized Parents and Teachers program, which began with a pilot project in 1991, was a public/private partnership between the Danforth Foundation and the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. This home-school early intervention project helped pave the way for efforts like Caring Communities. Furthermore, the state had four new directors within this time period, which provided a more open attitude and a willingness to admit that the system was in trouble. As Jane Paine from the Danforth Foundation put it,

"If you don't admit you have a problem, you'll never solve it."

The early discussions among the agencies and the foundation led to an agreement to focus on two sites in the state and to promote community decision-making and family support. Khatib Waheed, Director of the Walbridge Caring Communities Program, described the vision:

"We recognized that we can no longer continue to try and deal with the dysfunction that children have without also working with the family, but we also recognize that working with the family is not enough and that we must begin to deal with the community as well."

For more than a decade Maryland agencies had been trying to fill gaps in services and to work cooperatively. However, they were proceeding cautiously. Donna Stark, Director of the Children and Families Services Reform Initiative explains the problem:

"We were trying to fit families into services that we had available. Where they weren't available, we tried to fill them by

pointing to a department and saying, 'These families look like they belong to you, so you develop a program'."

At the same time, the new Governor was concerned about the maze of services that families had to face and the increasing rate and cost of taking children away from their families when things went wrong. He called for bold new strategies that would go beyond textbook changes in bureaucracy and would do "something better for families." He charged the Human Services Subcabinet to find new ways to address the core issues.

Simultaneously, the Casey Foundation was interested in helping to reform the children and family services system. This combination of events led to a grant from the Foundation to strengthen efforts and provide technical assistance to launch a new concept of more integrated, intensive and flexible family services. A home visit to an organization that offered family centered home-based support provided greater insight into family-focused services. It was an event that helped clarify how a conceptual vision could become a reality.

Leadership

"We know what to do; now we need the political will to make it happen, and more importantly, the energy to sustain it so that it doesn't become just another new idea. The landscape is littered with new ideas that were started and went away. What's important here is that you have to have the pied piper."

Gary Stangler
Missouri Department of Social Services

Leadership comes in many forms and from people at different levels. Although the political leadership of Governors, other elected officials and agency directors is critical to shaping successful efforts, it is the sustained, persistent and shared leadership of many that truly mobilizes improved services for children and families. The case study presentations repeatedly described leadership at several levels, including:

- Foundation officials who often have the initial vision and resources to make the project happen and keep it going;
- Mid-level managers who take risks, cut through the bureaucratic red tape and reduce fragmentation of services;
- Project directors who believe strongly in the program philosophy and share their passion with staff and families in a way that sustains the project;
- Directors and staff who are dedicated to families and who spend endless hours building relation-

ships and learning new ways to bring about change;

- Families and other community residents who become empowered to take charge of their own lives and add their voice to the decision-making of the project.

Several characteristics appear to define these leaders. Although it is helpful if key leaders have access to people in power, their human characteristics seem to be the hallmark of their ability to lead. They are described as being able to take various perspectives and to serve as models and facilitators of collaboration. For example, one leader from Maryland was referred to as "a sort of one-woman service integration project." Pam Phelps, Chair of the State Coordinating Council in Florida described the facilitating role this way:

"It is our job to pull the hands across the tables of all the people who have knowledge and see that each voice has the right to be heard."

Effective leaders are seen as courageous, willing to take risks, willing to take responsibility for change, able to seize an opportunity to make change, open to new ideas, motivated, energetic and dedicated. Perhaps most important of all, leaders are described as being persistent—as being people who are not easily defeated and can encourage others to remain enthusiastic. Peggy Pizzo, from the National Center for Clinical Infant Programs and a symposium participant put it this way:

"Defeatism and cynicism are real barriers. We need leaders who keep pushing all of us not to despair and to keep on going ahead."

Flexibility and Adequate Resources

"I think one of the first things that we agreed on was that this was not a matter of the state telling the local communities what they could do for them or wanted them to do. Rather, it was the state offering resources, identifying the kind of programs they did have, and entering into real partnerships."

Jane Paine
The Danforth Foundation

One of the central features of successful collaborations is that they have the flexibility to do things differently, to break the mold regarding the way service systems are structured, the way services are delivered locally and the manner in which funds are distributed. But it is not flexibility alone that makes for success. As mentioned earlier, initial funding as well as ongoing support is critical.

Florida developed a system of shared ownership of the Council that went beyond a single agency. The Council was staffed by the two agencies (HRS and DOE) and represented consumers, providers, and professionals associated with prevention and early intervention programs and initiatives. Along with the state council, local councils were created and are being encouraged to develop according to their own needs. Funds are appropriated at the state level to support Council activities. A portion of the pre-kindergarten allocation was used in 1991-92 to enhance and expand the Head Start programs in Florida. Creating equity in funding among state- and federally-funded, and federally subsidized pre-school programs is a priority for the Council and the two agencies.

Missouri was flexible enough to use the schools as the hub of services for families in the community, and to allow local advisory boards to develop different kinds of programs based on community needs. At Walbridge, this resulted in a definite commitment to establish a culturally sensitive program and to hire staff who come from the community. The Danforth Foundation helped launch the effort, although most staff positions are funded from core state agency funds, and local communities have decision-making power, through needs identification, over how resources are spent.

Maryland developed a unique partnership with families and with local government. They made a commitment to change the way services are delivered to families, the way decisions are made, and the way funds are distributed. The more flexible approach to service delivery included the extensive use of intensive home-based services. Marie Brantley, a case manager at the Commission for Families explained that the use of the home based approach both empowers families because the staff meets the family on their own "turf" and allows that staff to discover family strengths. Family-centered services encourage work with the whole family, as the family itself defines its members and priorities.

The decision-making process about children and family services shifted from single state agencies to the Human Services Subcabinet and to local governing boards where community priorities are established and community strategies are developed. Funds for placement were redirected to family preservation. The state agencies put together funds that could be used flexibly at the local level. Flexibility in the use of funds was also allowed at the family worker level so they could purchase things for the families that they need immediately, therefore often avoiding a crisis.

Problem-Solving Structures and Process

"One of the things that we hear over and over is the need for a continuous process of problem-solving."

Ellen Galinsky
Families and Work Institute

An important element of the models was the development of formal and informal mechanisms and procedures for problem-solving and dealing with conflict. The process of solving problems and developing a common agenda occurred as people spent time together learning how to resolve discord, to document problems and to promote ongoing dialogue. Overcoming barriers was seen as a continual process that developed through emerging relationships among the key players, and through strong belief and commitment to the possibility of change.

Problem-solving often occurred within the collaborative structures set up at the state and local level. Panelists frequently attributed the success of these structures to the fact that they included a wide variety of people and that the appointment of members was often made by more than one source. For example, in Missouri they have both a local advisory board composed of a variety of people from the community, and an interagency team which services a mid-management group with designees from the directors. In Florida the 30 members of the State Council also represent a variety of roles and are appointed by the Governor, the Commissioner of Education, the Secretary of Health and Rehabilitative Services, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House.

Procedures for problem-solving have evolved within these structures. For example, again in Florida, Council members extensively document the decisions and follow-up needed and make sure that all key players in the state receive copies. The state level structure often interfaces with the local structure. For example, in Maryland, the local Governing Board is the place where the voice of the family can be heard. If a policy barrier is identified at that level, it is up to the Board to work with the state subcabinet to help solve any policy barriers.

Supportive Relationships

"The successes that are being met in these various projects have some humanity to them, have some (level of) intimacy to them."

Ed Meade
Academy for Educational Development

The real heart of these collaborations can be found in the strong bonds of trust that develop among the partners in the collaboration, with other agencies in the community and especially with the families served. Referring to the bond which has developed in the Florida State Council, William Fillmore of the Head Start Association said:

"One of the reasons we have had tremendous success is because of the cohesiveness that has developed within the group. The group has trust in one another, and when you have trust in people, you are able to achieve much more than you could otherwise."

Marie Brantley, a Case Manager from Maryland, spoke of the sense of trust and power that develops with other community agencies. She said:

"We find more and more that lots of different people are getting to know our work. We have good relationships with property managers, training program people and other service providers. They know we are going to do all that we can to help the person participate."

Perhaps most important of all are the strong relationships that develop with families and in the community. These most often develop through the time and dedication of the staff. Again, Marie Brantley explained:

"The amount of time and the type of relationships that we build with families are intense. In terms of time, our case-loads are very small so that we are able to spend a lot of time with families, ranging from three hours to 20 hours a week. We may see some families everyday depending on what's happening with the family. We are available to the family 24 hours a day, seven days a week. We work very hard to bond with the families."

Khatib Waheed, from the Walbridge Caring Communities Program explains the importance of developing non-kinship networks in the community.

"Families in our community are splintered in terms of location. You may have some kinfolk down the street, but most time they live in another part of the city. There needs to be support within the community where people have a shared sense of values and goals."

Demonstrated Results

"The bottom line is whatever we do makes no difference unless the family can see a difference in how they are treated, and in the sensitivity of the institution to their needs. We have succeeded if they gain the power to affect their lives differently."

Mary Godfrey
Maryland Department of Parks and Recreation

Demonstrating results to policy-makers is critical to the future of these creative efforts. All of the projects had formal evaluation procedures underway, and some projects were looking into new ways to measure outcomes.

For example, in Missouri, Caring Communities initially began with a focus on measuring school progress which was an area where data was readily available. The specific indicators that were used included: grades, absenteeism, and citizenship indicators or measures of personal behavior. Performance by students at the Walbridge School was compared with that of students in demographically similar comparison sites. Walbridge students were grouped in terms of those who received intensive services, light services, and no services. Based on the initial experience with evaluation, a new, more comprehensive evaluation design is being developed to incorporate outcome measures related to staying in the home, and contact with the juvenile justice system.

In Maryland, for the first time, local entities are being evaluated and their budgets are based on performance. Outcome measurements are developed based on each local jurisdiction's own estimate of numbers of families it will be able to serve, and number of placements it will be able to prevent.

In Florida, the Strategic Plan for Prevention and Early Intervention lists eight specific program goals that the two agencies working together intend to achieve, as well as five system goals that must be put in place in order to facilitate program goals. For each program goal, outcome indicators and benchmarks have been developed. Outcome indicators have also been developed to measure progress on system goals.

The anecdotal information presented by the panels from each state demonstrated the positive results so evident in these projects. People talked of helping children remain successfully at school, at home and out of the juvenile justice system; of parents assuming roles that they had never considered before; of improved school attendance, improved school behavior, improved school achievement; and of non-kinship groups that are helping to build a sense of family within communities. Such results are testimonials to the spirit and success of these efforts. As their enterprises are evolving and expanding, the panelists acknowledged that they would confront new challenges: seeking creative ways to maintain vibrancy and flexibility, finding ways to replicate programs while preserving individual flavor, and ensuring that state governments take their intensive and innovative efforts to scale.

Where Do We Go From Here? Forging New Relationships

*"Collaborations occur among people, not among institutions."
(Bruner, 1991)*

This symposium featured three distinct initiatives which demonstrate a collaborative approach to improving services for children and families. Each example was different in its overall goal: the Florida example focused on expanding and improving early childhood services before school, the Missouri example focused on expanding school-based services and the Maryland example focused on improving the overall service system to families. Yet regardless of the program goal, all three cases illustrate the key ingredients necessary to make change.

First, to improve services, the overall climate must be right. This usually includes some earlier efforts to promote cooperation among agencies. Collaborative efforts do not grow all at once, rather they develop

incrementally over time. These earlier partnerships help set the stage for further collaboration once a problem is identified and some new spark starts the movement towards change.

Once the stage is set, there must be leadership at all levels to carry any new vision into reality. The leadership at the community level is particularly important to keep the vision and passion alive. Furthermore, problem-solving structures must be established to promote and facilitate communication among the key players. In addition, there must be some flexibility in the funding streams and policies that allow new and creative initiatives to emerge. However, flexibility in funding is not enough. Resources must be adequate to actually meet the demands for service.

Lessons to be Learned Closing Remarks by Lisbeth Schorr

What must we beware of?

- That collaboration not be seen as a substitute for change, as a veneer to hide the fact that nothing is really changing for children and families, that we are failing to invest the resources that would improve outcomes, failing to invest in basic income supports.
- Becoming so absorbed by the difficulty and complexity of what we are trying to change at the system level, that we lose sight of the goal of improving the lives of children and families.
- Flash-in-the-pan collaboration that is not sustained and has not created fundamental change.

Where do we lack consensus or need more information?

- Can significant change take place in the absence of increased funding, or in fact, do funding shortages stimulate efforts to make existing resources work more effectively?
- Are we prepared to let our programs be judged by measurable outcomes for children and families?
- Should new agencies be developed that would focus specifically on children or can successful efforts be achieved as well with a more collaborative approach across existing agencies?
- How do we measure the success of our efforts? Against what criteria?

How do we replicate success?

- Do we need models? principles? guidelines? minimum standards?
- How do we go to scale and maintain local variation?
- How do we train people to manage and staff restructured human services?
- Who is going to stimulate replication of proven success?

All of these key ingredients seem to us to be standard fare in the recent literature on collaboration. What seemed more unique in this particular symposium was an overall message about the importance of emerging relationships among the key players. *Forging supportive relationships appears to be both the heart of the collaborative process and a central aspect in an emerging vision of improved services for children and families.*

Given our fragmented system of services, the relationships among service providers is critical to ensuring a more holistic approach to meeting the comprehensive needs of families. Problem-solving structures promote communication among key players. Flexible policies allow a more cooperative spirit to emerge. Successful leaders nurture and support those around them. All of these ingredients lead to more supportive relationships among service providers which can result in improved services to children and families.

Besides the importance of collaboration as a way to build relationships among providers, the message throughout the symposium was that the families themselves needed more emotional support. Today, perhaps more than ever before, a combination of skill and compassion is needed to deal with the intense problems facing families.

The challenge of human service delivery in the 1990s therefore goes far beyond finding more coordinated ways of providing services. Because families are isolated and torn away from traditional kinship networks, service providers are being asked to step into new roles, to provide emotional support to children and families and to become more intensely involved in their lives. Teachers, social workers, medical professionals, and others must not only learn to work together, but should have a renewed commitment to the spirit of the individual and the development of trusting relationships.

As we move to improve services through collaboration, we face the challenges of documenting results, providing technical assistance, and sharing information across the country regarding what works. The A.L. Mailman Family Foundation Symposium provided such an opportunity. Other promising initiatives to promote this type of information sharing have been launched by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, including the development of a national center on services integration.

Considering the importance of forging new relationships as illustrated in this symposium, it is critical that future efforts also focus attention on supporting service providers and reinforcing a new vision of improved services. Given the intensity of the problems they see everyday, it is important that people working in the human service and education fields feel that their work is recognized and supported, particularly through adequate compensation and opportunities for professional development. It is through such recognition that the dedication and leadership needed to be successful at the local level will be encouraged. Furthermore, in the future we must focus much more attention on the type of training which fosters the interpersonal skills so important to successful collaboration.

Finally, we must continue to remind ourselves that collaboration is not a goal in and of itself, but rather the means by which to realize our vision of comprehensive, compassionate services for children and families. This vision—one which promotes and respects the decisions and circumstances of individuals and communities—has begun to take hold, but will require sustained commitment if it is to bring about lasting change in programs and systems. We must help service providers understand that eliminating poverty demands both human and financial support for children and families. Successful human services of the future will forge new relationships with families, and provide the non-kinship networks so essential to communities that truly care about their children.

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